

Focus Indicators

FOR TEACHING IN
2021-2022

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed teaching and learning in ways that will have a lasting impact. As schools return to in-person learning, educators face new challenges and opportunities to support student growth and well-being. This resource supports educators and school and district leaders to focus meaningful goal-setting, professional learning, feedback, and evaluation on key practices for teaching for teaching in the 2021-2022 school year.

FOCUS INDICATORS

CLICK ON AN INDICATOR TO GET STARTED

I-A [Curriculum & Planning](#)

II-B [Learning Environment](#)

II-D [Cultural Proficiency](#)

III-B [Family Collaboration](#)

IV-A [Reflection](#)

IV-C [Professional Collaboration](#)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Focus Indicators are informed by the following guiding principles, which reflect the unique context of teaching and learning in the year ahead:

- Prioritize the **social-emotional wellbeing of students and educators** as the foundation for effective teaching and learning
- Promote **culturally responsive, anti-racist teaching and leading practices** that disrupt patterns of inequities and systems of oppression against Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and multiracial communities.
- Provide all students with **access to grade-level instruction** and the supports they need to be successful
- **Engage students and families** in learning through meaningful partnerships

EACH INDICATOR PAGE FEATURES:

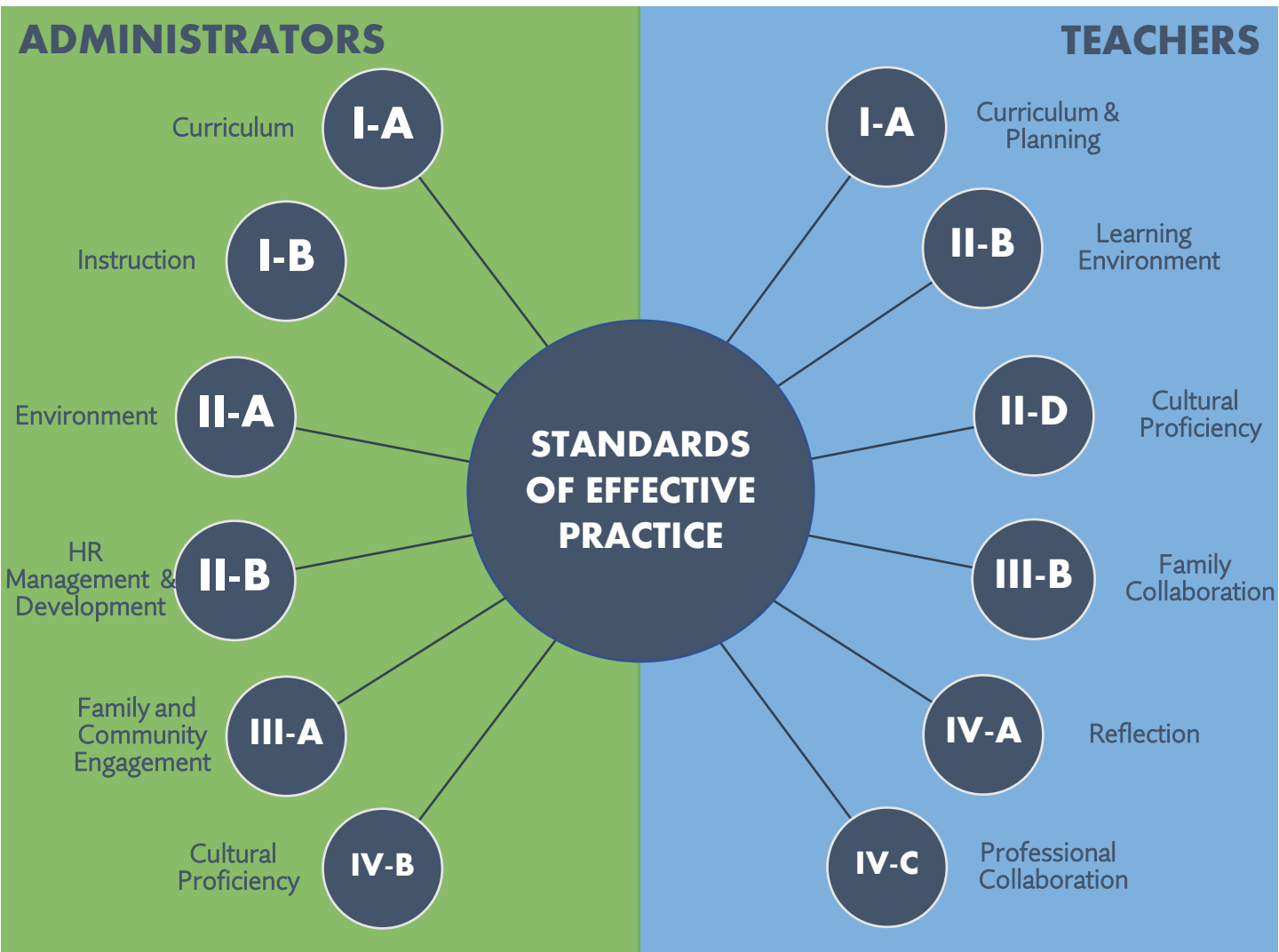


1. **Standard and Indicator Description**
2. **Key Practices**, adapted from elements associated with the Focus Indicator to highlight practices of specific relevance to the unique context of the 2021-22 school year.
3. **Focus Points for Feedback, Collaboration, and Support** provide examples of specific practices within this context.
4. **Supportive Resources**

Overview

2021-2022
**FOCUS
INDICATORS**

The Focus Indicators highlight the highest priority practices for teaching and leading beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Because teachers and administrators depend on one another to be effective in meeting the needs of every student, the Focus Indicators for teachers and administrators are complimentary.



GENERAL RESOURCES

[Supports and Resources for Educator Evaluation Implementation](#) | DESE

[Acceleration Roadmap](#) | DESE and TNTF

[Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success](#)
DESE

[Restart & Recovery: Considerations for Teaching and Learning](#) | Council of Chief State School Officers

[Culturally responsive teaching: What you need to know](#) |
Understood

[A Restorative Approach for Equitable Education](#)
Learning Policy Institute

I-A Curriculum & Planning

Knows the subject matter well, has a good grasp of child development and how students learn, and designs effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measurable outcomes.

KEY PRACTICES

Implements standards-aligned units and lessons with clear objectives, challenging tasks, and appropriate pacing, sequencing, resources, and supports for English learners and students with disabilities.

Provides differentiated, culturally responsive learning experiences that enable each student to access the curriculum and progress toward learning goals.

Engages students in learning experiences that enable them to acquire complex knowledge and subject-specific skills and vocabulary.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Leveraging high-quality, culturally relevant instructional materials as the starting point for tailored instruction
- ▶ Interrogating curricular materials for bias and supporting students to do so
- ▶ Ensuring that each lesson and unit is purposefully planned and enacted to support all students to access and engage in rigorous, grade-level aligned tasks and accelerate their learning of the essential content of their grade-level, regardless of their starting point
- ▶ Constructing student-centered learning experiences that build on students' assets—their identity, cultural and language background, interests, and aspirations—to make the learning relevant and engaging
- ▶ Encouraging student agency and engagement by delivering content across multiple modalities, offering multiple entry points, and providing choice within assignments
- ▶ Integrating into units and lessons authentic opportunities to help students process and think critically about current and historical events, and the personal and sociopolitical issues that impact their communities and the world
- ▶ Providing opportunities for student discourse and the development of students' ideas, helping students craft an academic identity (not just "I'm learning about biology," but "I am a biologist")
- ▶ Leveraging technology to help make student thinking and learning visible

RESOURCES

[Acceleration Roadmap](#) | DESE and TNTP

[Accessing Grade Level Content](#) | *The Rennie Center*

[Curriculum RATings by TEachers \(CURATE\)](#) | DESE

[MASS Literacy](#) | DESE

[Guidance for Accelerating Student Learning](#) | *Instruction Partners*

[The Why, What, Where, and How of Deeper Learning in American Secondary Schools](#)

Jal Mehta & Sarah Fine | Jobs for the Future

II-B

Learning Environment

**STANDARD II
TEACHING ALL
STUDENTS**

Creates and maintains a safe and collaborative learning environment that motivates students to take academic risks, challenge themselves, and claim ownership of their learning.

KEY PRACTICES

Uses rituals and routines to create and maintain a safe learning environment (physical, intellectual, social-emotional, and digital) where all students feel seen, heard, and respected.

Develops students' relationship and communication skills with both the teacher and their peers by providing opportunities for students to learn in groups with diverse peers and facilitating meaningful academic discourse.

Cultivates learning experiences across learning platforms (e.g. in-person, virtual, independent) that guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; take academic risks; and challenge themselves to learn

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Co-creating agreements with students for safe, collaborative, and culturally responsive learning environments
- ▶ Making individual connections with students before school starts and throughout the school year
- ▶ Implementing routines, rituals, and lesson activities to build community and support students' social-emotional learning and well-being
- ▶ Providing opportunities for students to routinely collaborate with peers in a variety of ways, from in-classroom pairings and groupings, to virtual platforms where/when valuable (e.g. virtual discussion boards; peer feedback on student work)
- ▶ Focusing on inquiry and reflection as strategies for engagement as well as for ensuring learning, particularly as many students are rebuilding both academic and social support systems
- ▶ Regularly utilizing student surveys or other forms of feedback to check in on students' wellbeing and gain a better understanding of things that cannot be observed but may be impacting access to learning, such as student mindsets and circumstances
- ▶ Provide scaffolded supports to promote students' success in independent learning
- ▶ Ensuring students receive regular feedback on work and participation using an asset-based feedback approach that includes making positive connections with students, acknowledging the difficulty of the task, affirming students' ability to succeed, and providing specific feedback that advances learning

RESOURCES

[Safe and Supportive Schools](#) | DESE

[Three Signature SEL Practices](#) | CASEL

[Supporting Student Resilience and Well-Being with Trauma-Informed Care: Educator Self-Assessment & Planning Tool](#) | Center for Great Teachers & Leaders

[Copilot-Elevate Survey](#) and [CORE Rally Instrument](#)

[Helping Students Heal from Trauma](#) | Rennie Center

[Evidence-Based Strategies for Assessing Students' Social and Emotional Wellbeing](#) | Annenberg Institute & Results for America

Examples of evidence-based non-academic assessments include the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and the [California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys](#).

STANDARD II
**TEACHING ALL
STUDENTS**

II-D Cultural Proficiency

Actively creates and maintains an environment in which students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are respected.

KEY PRACTICES

Establishes an environment in which students demonstrate respect for and affirm their own (self-awareness) and others' (social awareness) differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.

from IV-A: Reflection
Regularly reflects on one's own cultural lens in order to remain attuned to one's strengths, gaps, and biases, relative to both individual and student growth, and responds to them in constructive ways.

from I-A: Curriculum & Planning
Provides differentiated, culturally responsive learning experiences that enable each student to access the curriculum and progress toward learning goals.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Prioritizing authentic, culturally-responsive relationship-building that centers students' lived experiences
- ▶ Shaping learning and discussions around topics of interest to students that reflect multiple perspectives, cultural differences, and backgrounds and incorporate knowledge of students' cultural background/practices
- ▶ Constructing student-centered learning experiences that build on students' assets—their identity, cultural and language background, interests, and aspirations—to make the learning relevant and engaging
- ▶ Building understanding and awareness through communal learning and collaborative worktime
- ▶ Interrupting moments of bias or racism, whether spoken or read, and using those moments to model for students how to understand and address them going forward
- ▶ Challenging students to think about and consistently question why things are the way they are, and encouraging students to see themselves as agents of social change and transformation
- ▶ Seeking out the perspectives, feedback, and voices of all students and families in the classroom learning community and incorporating those voices into decision-making around teaching and learning environments
- ▶ Considering and responding to the ways that issues of equity and access have affected and continue to influence students' learning experiences and environments as a result of the pandemic, particularly in relation to academic and social support systems
- ▶ Using data (e.g., attendance, assessment, student feedback, discipline) to identify and disrupt inequities in access, treatment, and achievement in your classroom
- ▶ Regularly reflecting on one's own biases, attitudes, and assumptions about students and families and adjusting practice accordingly

RESOURCES

[Challenging Assumptions Reflection Tool](#) | *Flamboyant Foundation*

[Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading](#) | *DESE*

[SEL as a Lever for Equity](#) | *CASEL*

[Culturally Responsive Teaching](#) | *Understood*

[Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development](#) | *DESE*

[Tools for Anti-Racist Teaching](#) | *PBS*

III-B Family Collaboration

Collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school.

KEY PRACTICES

Builds authentic relationships with families to establish open, two-way partnerships and dialogue about students' school experiences.

Communicates with families about the curriculum regularly in a culturally proficient manner that supports collaboration around individual student academic progress.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Regularly reaching out and listening to families, in formal and informal ways, about their values and priorities for their students' academic learning and experience in school
- ▶ Connecting with families early on and using systems to maintain regular two-way communication throughout the year,
- ▶ Providing opportunities for families to provide input on classroom decisions (e.g., initiatives, celebrations, routines), demonstrating understanding of and respect for different home languages, cultures, and values
- ▶ Sharing concrete strategies for supporting academic learning at school and at home, while minimizing the need for parental instruction and oversight as feasible
- ▶ Encouraging families of English learners to use their home language when supporting their children's academic learning, reinforcing the message to those families that they can support and continue their children's progress in their home language
- ▶ Asking families for their communication preferences, including primary contact, time of day, frequency, and method of communication
- ▶ Interrogating one's own biases around family communication and learning more about students' cultures and backgrounds to support strengths-based, culturally responsive communication

RESOURCES

[Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts](#) | Massachusetts Family Engagement Coalition

[Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers](#) | Flamboyant Foundation

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Family Engagement in the Time of COVID-19 and Remote Learning, and Always](#) | Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative at the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

[English Learner Blueprint: Effective Family Engagement](#) | DESE

IV-A Reflection

STANDARD IV PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Demonstrates the capacity to reflect on and improve the educator's own practice, using informal means as well as meetings with teams and work groups to gather information, analyze data, examine issues, set meaningful goals, and develop new approaches in order to improve teaching and learning.

KEY PRACTICES

Regularly reflects on the effectiveness of lessons, units, and interactions with students, both individually and with colleagues, and uses insights gained to improve practice and student learning.

Regularly reflects on one's own cultural lens in order to remain attuned to one's strengths, gaps, and biases, relative to both individual and student growth, and responds to them in constructive ways

FOCUS FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT ON:

- ▶ Recognizing that teaching after an extended period of disrupted schooling will continue to require new professional learning and adjustments to practice, and exercising self-care and compassion
- ▶ Adopting an inquiry-based approach to professional learning and reflection, and adjusting practice on a regular, ongoing basis
- ▶ Seeking and valuing input and feedback from colleagues, students, and families on the effectiveness of teaching and learning
- ▶ Examining student learning and other classroom data to identify disproportionality or disparate outcomes for particular students or groups of students

STANDARD IV PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

IV-C Professional Collaboration

Collaborates effectively with colleagues on a wide range of tasks.

KEY PRACTICE

Consistently and effectively collaborates with colleagues on teaching and learning.

FOCUS FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT ON:

- ▶ Differentiating roles and responsibilities in adapting and implementing culturally responsive, standards-based units and well-structured lessons
- ▶ Collaborating around and sharing common strategies for supporting students to engage and learn, including strategies to build community and welcome students back, support their social emotional health and wellbeing, and honor their lived experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism
- ▶ Collaboratively planning with content/SPED/ESL teachers and other specialists to align instruction and coordinate scaffolding for English learners and students with disabilities
- ▶ Collaborating around and sharing common family engagement strategies and supports for student learning to center and strengthen family engagement across grades and subject areas

RESOURCES

[Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading](#) | DESE

[Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide](#) | New America

[Culture in the Classroom](#) | Learning for Justice

[Collaborative Planning Templates for Content/ESL/SPED Teachers](#)
Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

[Collaboration: Working Together to Serve Multilingual Learners](#)
WIDA